

Town Needs More Fire Protection

By SUSANNA SHOHAM

There is a clear need for an additional fire station in Duxbury because only a little over one-third of residents can currently be reached by emergency fire vehicles within the necessary 4-minute response time, according to a new report by the public safety committee.

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The 8-member committee, appointed by the town manager last June, presented a comprehensive 117-page report to selectmen this week. The committee examined existing conditions in the fire and police departments, reviewed response times for fire and ambulance vehicles, and considered options that would increase the number of residents covered within a 4-minute response time.

The committee concluded that the town of 14,500 needs more than one fire station to protect it, because with the one station at the corner of Tremont and Mayflower Sts. only 36% of residents can be reached within the critical 4-minute response time for fire emergencies. This percentage is based on the fact that fire and emergency vehicles travel at an average speed of 30 mph and in 4 minutes they can only reach the 36% of residents who live within 2 miles of the fire station. The committee used the 4-minute response time because, according to Fire Chief Kenneth Erickson, a "flashover," which is the explosion of a smoke-filled room into flame, usually happens within 7 minutes in a wooden structure, and after a flashover the search and rescue operation typically stops.

According to the report, areas included in the 36% are the "very densely populated shore area," 3 of the town's 4 business centers, (Hall's Corner, Millbrook, and Snug Harbor; Cox Corner is outside the 4-minute radius), 3 of Duxbury's 4 elderly housing complexes (Hall's Corner, Chestnut St. and Island Creek; Village of Duxbury is excluded), 2 schools, DES, DJSHS, and the Duxbury Library. Chandler School is outside the 4-minute response time area.

The 2 largest areas outside of the 4-minute response time radius are northwest and southwest Duxbury, both areas of significant recent development.

The committee compared Duxbury's statistics, its 14,500 residents, 23.1 square miles and 1 fire station, to neighboring towns. Kingston, with a population of 10,000 and a land area of 19 square miles, has 1 main station and 1 substation. Norwell with 21.3 square miles and 10,000 people has 2 stations and Marshfield with 20.5 square miles and 22,600 people has 3 fire stations.

The committee considered 14 options to increase the percentage of the population that could be reached within 4 minutes and ranked each one accordingly. Included among these options were keeping the current fire station at Tremont St., which was built in 1968, and opening substations in either the northwest or southwest parts of town or relocating the fire department and the police department to a central location and also opening fire substations. Creating a new, centrally located fire/police department would cost an estimated \$2 million.

Keeping the fire station at its current location and opening a satellite station at the Ashdod fire station, which is currently not a fire station, (It is being used by Jordan Hospital Paramedics.), was the option the committee liked best. With Ashdod as a working fire station, 55% of the population could be reached within 4 minutes for fire emergencies and 93% for medical emergencies. (Currently 57% of residents are reached within 4 minutes for medical emergencies. Ambulances travel at 45 mph.)

Despite Ashdod's #1 ranking, the committee had reservations about this plan. The report states that Ashdod would provide a short-term solution and could operate within the next year, however, the committee did not feel opening Ashdod was the best long-term solution because "not only is it small and frankly somewhat in poor condition" but it may not be able to meet the town's future growth needs. Renovating Ashdod would cost \$250,000.

Another high-ranking option favored by the committee included keeping the current fire station and opening a satellite station at Rte. 53 and Bravender Rd., which would cover 63% of the town within the 4-minute response time and cost approximately \$193,000 for the land and \$500,000 for the station. Opening a substation at West and Lincoln St. was another option considered and it would cover 52% of the town within 4 minutes and cost \$765,552.

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Creating a centrally located public safety building would not be advantageous, according to the report, because it would reduce the number of residents who are within the 4-minute response radius. "This is because any location near the geographic center of Duxbury excludes the very densely populated shore area," stated the report.

Selectmen praised the committee for its effort.

"It's a wonderful report," Selectman Friend Weiler said. "Clearly I see there is definitely a need for us to do something in the west part of town."

"It clearly points out that at the current circumstances, we're at unacceptable levels," said Selectman Chairman James Murphy.

Selectmen agreed to consider this issue and speak to their state legislators regarding bills for funding new public safety facilities.

In other business, selectmen

- learned that the town has been awarded a low interest loan that is comparable to a 25% grant from the state Department of Environmental Protection for the Bluefish River and Snug Harbor wastewater collection and disposal systems. A total of \$679,541 will be paid to the town at a 2.5% interest rate for the cost of design and construction of these projects, for which Town Meeting appropriated \$650,000. The low interest rate is equivalent to a 25%

grant and represents a savings of \$170,000 to the town and property owners.

Selectmen acknowledged the efforts of Joe Grady, the town's conservation administrator, and Ruth Rowley, Board of Health member for processing the loan applications.

On July 1 at 10 on the Bluefish River bridge, the state Secretary of Environmental Affairs will award town officials with a check as part of a press conference. The public is invited to attend.

- awarded \$10,000 from the Ellison Fund for the repair and installation of underground power to the lights at Train softball field. Recreation Director Gordon Cushing requested funding for this project. Ellison Fund money is reserved for recreation projects.

- voted 3-0 to approve the installation of a 4-way stop sign at Franklin and Temple St.

- approved a bonus shellfish season for the commercial harvesting of soft-shell clams only.

- agreed to draft a letter of support for the stockpiling of potassium iodine for a nuclear emergency for Mary Elizabeth Lampert, a member of the Nuclear Advisory Committee, to take with her to a Nuclear Regulatory Commission meeting in Washington, DC. Potassium iodine is an inexpensive drug with a 5-year shelf-life that people can take in the event of a nuclear emergency because it blocks radioactive iodine from entering the thyroid gland.

Selectmen also reappointed Lampert, as well as Albert Firestone, to 3-year terms on this committee.

- appointed Nancy McLean to a 3-year term on the Board of Health. Selectmen also reappointed chairman Eric Butler to a 3-year term but voted 2 to 1 against reappointing Ruth Rowley to a 3-year term, as Rowley has already served 2 consecutive terms. Instead they reappointed Rowley to fill an unexpired 1-year term created by a member who resigned.

- appointed Donald Butler to a 3-year term on the Recreation Activities Committee.

- appointed Selectmen Friend Weiler to serve on the Plymouth County Advisory Board.

- last week appointed high school senior John Dunleavy to the Cable Television Committee.